

Chairmanship: Sweden

1311th PLENARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

1. Date: Thursday, 29 April 2021 (via video teleconference)

Opened: 10 a.m.

Suspended: 12.55 p.m.

Resumed: 3 p.m.

Closed: 4.35 p.m.

2. Chairperson: Ambassador U. Funered

3. Subjects discussed – Statements – Decisions/documents adopted:

Agenda item 1: REPORT BY THE HEAD OF THE OSCE PROGRAMME
OFFICE IN DUSHANBE

Chairperson, Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe (PC.FR/10/21 OSCE+), Portugal-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Moldova and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/630/21), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/609/21), United States of America (PC.DEL/601/21), Turkey (PC.DEL/618/21 OSCE+), United Kingdom (PC.DEL/603/21 OSCE+), Kazakhstan (PC.DEL/623/21 OSCE+), Norway (PC.DEL/602/21), Uzbekistan, Tajikistan

Agenda item 2: REVIEW OF CURRENT ISSUES

Chairperson

(a) *Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea*: Ukraine (PC.DEL/616/21), Portugal-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Georgia, Moldova and

Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/629/21), Switzerland (PC.DEL/628/21 OSCE+), Turkey (PC.DEL/627/21 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/604/21), Canada, United Kingdom

- (b) *Deteriorating situation in Ukraine and continued non-implementation by the Ukrainian authorities of the Minsk agreements*: Russian Federation (PC.DEL/612/21)
- (c) *World Press Freedom Day, to be observed on 3 May 2021*: Russian Federation (PC.DEL/610/21), Portugal-European Union, Azerbaijan (PC.DEL/622/21 OSCE+), Lithuania (Annex 1), Latvia (Annex 2), Germany (Annex 3), Poland, France (Annex 4), Netherlands (Annex 5), United States of America (Annex 6), Ukraine, United Kingdom, Estonia
- (d) *Recommendations made at the 81st special joint meeting of the Permanent Council and the Forum for Security Co-operation on 14 April 2021 for stabilizing the situation and halting activities of the Russian Federation that give rise to concern*: Ukraine (PC.DEL/615/21), Portugal-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the European Free Trade Association country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Andorra, Georgia, Moldova, San Marino and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/631/21), Canada, United Kingdom, Norway (PC.DEL/613/21), Russian Federation (Annex 7), United States of America (PC.DEL/611/21)
- (e) *Seven years of the mass murder in Odessa on 2 May 2014*: Russian Federation (PC.DEL/620/21), Ukraine (PC.DEL/617/21)

Agenda item 3: REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
 CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE

- (a) *Briefing on the priority of the Swedish OSCE Chairpersonship for April 2021*: Chairperson
- (b) *Second Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting of 2021 (entitled “Democratic Law-Making: Ensuring Participation”)*, held via video teleconference on 26 and 27 April 2021: Chairperson
- (c) *Participation by the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for the South Caucasus in the 99th meeting of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism, co-facilitated by the Head of the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia and held in Ergneti, Georgia, on 27 April 2021*: Chairperson
- (d) *Participation by the Chairperson-in-Office in a virtual event of the Afghan Women’s Network on empowering Afghan women in peace and security, organized by the Permanent Mission of Afghanistan and held via video teleconference on 27 April 2021*: Chairperson

- (e) *Visit by the Chairperson-in-Office to Strasbourg to address the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, held on 28 April 2021: Chairperson*
- (f) *Meetings between the Chairperson-in-Office and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Ms. M. Pejčinović Burić, the President of the European Court of Human Rights, Mr. R. Spano, and the Director General of Democracy of the Council of Europe, Ms. S. Samardžić-Marković, held in Strasbourg on 28 April 2021: Chairperson*
- (g) *Participation by the Chairperson-in-Office and the Special Representative on Youth and Security in a round-table discussion on the involvement of young people in legislative and policymaking processes, held in Strasbourg on 28 April 2021: Chairperson*
- (h) *OSCE-wide Cyber/ICT Security Conference 2021 on “Building confidence and trust in an interconnected cyberspace”, to be held via video teleconference on 4 May 2021: Chairperson*
- (i) *Update on the COVID-19 situation with respect to the conduct of OSCE meetings in Vienna: Chairperson*

Agenda item 4: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

- (a) *Announcement of the distribution of the Secretary General’s weekly report (SEC.GAL/56/21/Corr.1 OSCE+): Secretary General, Russian Federation, Switzerland*
- (b) *Participation by the Secretary General in a virtual event of the Afghan Women’s Network on empowering Afghan women in peace and security, organized by the Permanent Mission of Afghanistan and held via video teleconference on 27 April 2021: Secretary General*
- (c) *Presentation of a thematic report on the OSCE’s efforts to prevent labour exploitation in its supply chains (SEC.GAL/55/21 OSCE+): Secretary General, Russian Federation (PC.DEL/621/21/Corr.1 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/614/21), Portugal-European Union, Belarus, United Kingdom, Spain*

Agenda item 5: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

27th Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, held in Andorra on 21 April 2021: Andorra (also on behalf of Portugal and Spain) (PC.DEL/626/21)

4. Next meeting:

Thursday, 6 May 2021, at 10 a.m., via video teleconference



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1311
29 April 2021
Annex 1

Original: ENGLISH

1311th Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1311, Agenda item 2(c)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF LITHUANIA**

Thank you, Madam Chairperson,

Lithuania aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union. Since my country was mentioned by the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation, I would like to exercise the right of reply in my national capacity.

Lithuania greatly values freedom of expression, freedom of the media and the safety of journalists. Let me reassure you that Lithuania strictly adheres to its international commitments in this regard. We also continue to support the key role of independent and reliable media in the OSCE area and worldwide.

Last summer, after consultations with the European Commission, the Lithuanian Radio and Television Commission decided to suspend retransmission of five programmes broadcast by “Russia Today” in the territory of the Republic of Lithuania. This decision had been made in line with EU sanctions on Dmitry Kiseliiov, who is the director general of the State news agency “Russia Today”. Mr. Kiseliiov has been named as a “central figure of government propaganda, supporting the deployment of Russian forces in Ukraine” in the list of persons under EU restrictive measures over the territorial integrity of Ukraine. His channels have repeatedly backed Kremlin disinformation campaigns, supporting the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and Russia’s ongoing military operations in eastern Ukraine.

In the broader context and to demonstrate just how freely the media operates in Lithuania, I would like to point out that Reporters Without Borders give Lithuania a good place on the World Press Freedom Index, in which it was ranked 28th out of 180 countries in both 2020 and 2021.

By comparison, Russia was placed 149th in 2020 and 150th in 2021. These numbers speak for themselves.

Madam Chairperson, I kindly ask you to attach this statement to the journal of the day.

I thank you.



1311th Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1311, Agenda item 2(c)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF LATVIA**

Madam Chairperson,

Latvia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the delegation of the European Union.

Since my country was mentioned, I would like to briefly exercise the right of reply in my national capacity.

We absolutely agree with the Russian delegation that free, independent and pluralistic media are of utmost importance in democratic societies. And Latvia remains committed to ensuring that these values be respected in Latvia and worldwide. Latvia's commitment to freedom of the media, freedom of expression and safety of journalists is widely known and acknowledged internationally.

All the cases mentioned by the Russian delegation have already been addressed exhaustively in Permanent Council meetings by the Latvian delegation, on 10 December 2020, 11 February 2021 and, last week, 22 April 2021. Briefly:

- The interrogation of journalists has been carried out on the margins of an ongoing criminal investigation, and the journalists have not been detained. Due process has been respected, and all activities carried out by the institutions concerned have been legitimate and proportionate. The investigation in question has nothing to do with the content of the respective media outlets or the professional duties of the journalists.
- The decision to implement a one-year-long suspension on the broadcasting of the TV channel “Russia RTR” was taken on account of continual instances of hate speech on that TV channel. In order to acquaint everyone with the grounds of the decision, I cited various outrageous examples at the Permanent Council meeting of 11 February 2021.
- And lastly, the decision to suspend illegal broadcasting on the part of various Russian TV channels in Latvia was taken because no one applied for licences to broadcast these channels, although the authorities called upon the owners to do so, also warning

them about possible consequences. Although the decision is subject to judicial review, no appeal has been made against it.

While Latvia has commented on the cases mentioned by the Russian delegation, we still do not have answers to our concerns regarding freedom of the media and safety of journalists in Russia. I wish to recall that on 9 April the Russian journalist Roman Anin was detained and interrogated in Moscow. He is a journalist of the media outlet “iStories”, which some time ago, out of fear for its security and possible repressions, moved its administrative office to Latvia. Another concern of ours is the Russian media outlet “Meduza”, which is currently suffering new restrictions under the Russian laws on foreign agents. “Meduza” is likewise a Russian media outlet that has moved its offices to Latvia. In order to see how Russian restrictions impact upon and interfere with the journalistic work, all you have to do is look for “Meduza” on Twitter.

In conclusion and taking into account all of the above-mentioned, I once again join the Russian delegation in calling upon all OSCE participating States, including the Russian Federation itself, to stop applying double standards and groundlessly politicizing media issues.

I kindly ask for my statement to be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1311
29 April 2021
Annex 3

ENGLISH
Original: GERMAN

1311th Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1311, Agenda item 2(c)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF GERMANY**

Madam Chairperson,

I fully endorse the comments made by my colleague from the European Union. Since my Russian colleague mentioned Germany in his statement, I should like to exercise my right of reply.

I share my Russian colleague's commitment to a free and independent press. However, I do not share his analysis that Western States are trying to make Russia "artificially look bad". We discussed some of the serious problems in Russia concerning media freedom here last week. The issues raised by my Russian colleague today in the Permanent Council make it no less urgent to find a solution to these problems in Russia.

Regarding the closure mentioned by my Russian colleague of the bank accounts at Commerzbank belonging to the news agency Ruptly and RT DE Productions GmbH, I should like to remind my colleague that this is a purely private-sector matter. The criticism and insinuations directed at the Federal Government by my Russian colleague are therefore misguided. The Federal Government is unable to exert any influence on matters relating to the private sector.

Press freedom is a cornerstone of our democracy in Germany. It is enshrined in the German Constitution and is also guaranteed for foreign media.

Thank you.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1311
29 April 2021
Annex 4

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

1311th Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1311, Agenda item 2(c)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF FRANCE**

France aligns itself with the statement by the European Union.

We once again vigorously deny any accusation of pressure or discrimination against the Russian media in our country. The behaviour of RT France and Sputnik as “organs of influence” has been highlighted by our highest authorities since the presidential election campaign in 2017. Despite this, they continue to operate freely in France. Our commitment to pluralism of opinion as a pillar of press freedom cannot be questioned.

France is also concerned about the deteriorating situation with regard to the rights to freedom of expression, opinion and information, and with regard to media freedom in Russia. In addition to the numerous cases of harassment and ill-treatment of journalists, more than 150 of them have been taken in for questioning during the recent demonstrations in Russia. The strengthening of repressive legislation, such as the amendments to the law on “foreign agents”, confirms that freedoms for civil society continue to be curtailed. The recent amendments to the Russian Constitution, adopted last summer, should not be used to justify any failure by Russia to implement its commitments under international law.

Madam Chairperson, I request that our statement be appended to the journal of the day.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1311
29 April 2021
Annex 5

Original: ENGLISH

1311th Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1311, Agenda item 2(c)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE NETHERLANDS**

Madam Chairperson,

In response to the statement made by the Russian delegation, and in addition to the statement made just now by the European Union delegation, I would like to briefly exercise my right of reply.

The Netherlands has a strong tradition of investigative journalism. My country sets high store on the role the media play in our democratic society.

In this particular case, *NRC Handelsblad*, one of the major Dutch newspapers, published an article publicly questioning the legal basis for the collection of certain data by the NCTV (National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism).

The publication of the article immediately led to a debate in the Dutch Parliament and a letter from the Minister of Justice to parliament on the subject.

As to the supposed reaction of an individual civil servant to the journalists involved, this was also discussed in parliament and a disciplinary inquiry was announced. As the inquiry is still ongoing, the Dutch Minister of Justice could not go into detail in the parliamentary debate earlier this month. I can however state that a disciplinary inquiry is a very serious instrument in Dutch legislation pertaining to civil servants.

I hope this brief outline of the case will help to illustrate the way in which the Dutch system of checks and balances works to protect media freedom, including the immediate calling to account of government and public servants by parliament and in public debate.

I kindly request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1311
29 April 2021
Annex 6

Original: ENGLISH

1311th Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1311, Agenda item 2(c)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

The United States, along with several other missions, planned on speaking on World Press Freedom Day at the 6 May Permanent Council meeting, but since my Russian colleague has raised this issue today and mentioned the United States, I would like to exercise my right of reply.

As my Russian colleague mentioned Twitter, it is true that some social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, have begun more clearly labelling when a source is government-controlled, closing accounts when government actors have been posing as something other than what they are and when account holders violate the site's terms of service. We hope the Russian Government appreciates these efforts to limit disinformation.

When it comes to the closure of accounts these commercial platforms make these moves completely independent of the US Government and not as a result of any US law or regulation.

The United States reaffirms our unshakable belief that a free press is essential to an informed citizenry. And I assure you that the United States is committed to protecting the safety of members of the press and holding accountable those who violate the law, including law enforcement officers. I assure you there is no law in the United States that suppresses journalists, or prosecutes them for reporting or expressing their views.

As we are, somewhat unexpectedly, discussing media freedom today, I would avail myself of this opportunity to remind the Permanent Council of a media organization that the Russian Government has made, to use the United Nations' language, "a target" – Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

The Russian Government continues to levy excessive fines against Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty under its "foreign agent" laws. The Kremlin prevents Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty from broadcasting on Russian television or radio and is now actively trying to drive Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty out of the country. In contrast, the US Government in no way hinders the ability of Russia Today and Sputnik to broadcast in the United States.

We reiterate our call on the Russian Government to end its repression of independent journalists and outlets, including Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and its affiliates. The people of Russia deserve access to a wide range of information and opinions, and a government that respects freedom of expression in keeping with Russia's international obligations and OSCE commitments.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1311
29 April 2021
Annex 7

Original: ENGLISH

1311th Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1311, Agenda item 2(d)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

Madam Chairperson,

We are surprised that Ukraine has introduced this current issue. We see no grounds for this both from a procedural standpoint and from the point of view of content. The distinguished representative of Ukraine makes reference to the outcomes of the joint meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council (PC) and the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) on 14 April 2021. Let us point out right away that, in accordance with paragraph II(B)9 of the Rules of the Procedure of the OSCE, issues examined during such a joint meeting are related to the competence of both bodies. Accordingly, they cannot be considered separately in the Permanent Council at a participating State's request.

During the joint meeting of the PC and FSC on 14 April 2021, the representative of Ukraine made reference to the instruments provided for by Chapter III of the Vienna Document 2011, including the possibility of drawing up appropriate recommendations. At the same time, Chapter III of the Vienna Document 2011 does not regulate in any way the possibility of discussing these recommendations in the Permanent Council at a participating State's request.

Without touching on the substance of the matter, we reiterate the position of the Russian Federation presented during the meeting on 14 April 2021. It is that our country considers Ukraine's activation of the procedures provided for by Chapter III, paragraph 16, of the Vienna Document 2011 to be unfounded. The Russian Federation is not engaged in any significant unusual military activity that would require information to be submitted under the Vienna Document 2011. We assume that this position taken by Russia was heard during the joint meeting of the PC and FSC, and that the possibilities for applying the mechanisms under Chapter III of the Vienna Document 2011 have been exhausted. Russia's explanations were attached to the journal of that meeting.

As for issues related to the current implementation of the Vienna Document 2011 as such, they fall within the competence of the FSC within the framework of the existing mandate of that OSCE decision making body.

Given the foregoing, we believe that the inclusion of the aforementioned current issue on the agenda of today's Permanent Council meeting is not in keeping with the nature and

substance of the political consultations in this main decision making body of the OSCE. We regard the attempts to artificially politicize practical aspects of pan European security co-operation as extremely destructive. We also call on the OSCE Chairmanship to refrain from actions that could be interpreted as an abuse of its authority.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of today's Permanent Council meeting.

Thank you for your attention.